



"Make no mistake about people who leap from burning windows. Their terror of falling from a great height is still just as great as it would be for you or me standing speculatively at the same window just checking out the view; ... The variable here is the other terror, the fire's flames: when the flames get close enough, falling to death becomes the slightly less terrible of two terrors. It's not desiring the fall; it's terror of the flames."

~David Foster Wallace

So you've made it! Past the barbwire, the sniper nests, the checkpoints, the cordons. Congratulations. Now I suppose I'm obliged to tell you, for your health and for my good and noble conscience, that the soldiers are ordered to shoot you on sight. They don't want the contamination spreading.

Why have you come, poor vagrant, my brother and comrade in this savage world? What flames licked at your feet, for you to contemplate jumping from your proud and lofty window like a trembling lead on the autumn breeze, into the misery below? I cannot begin to comprehend these flames. Come; steal a chair. I'll pour you a stiff one, and you can tell me anything you like: how much money you owe. Why that woman left you. Who's hot on your tail. Yeah? Everyone in this place has a demon. Maybe yours will earn another drink or two from the crowd. Tell your story well. Always stretch the truth but only a little.

I get it. Maybe the past doesn't matter anymore. This is your clean slate, your, uh, *tabula rasa*. Right? I get it. You just want a meal a few hours' sleep, and a box of bullets, so you can be on your way. Well, I won't stop you. I'll leave that to the mutants, the highwaymen, and every other God-forsaken thing waiting for you out there.

Hey. No one told you getting a fresh start would be easy.